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Report of the Administrator

SUMMARY

The present report traces the activities supported by the Special Unit for TCDC with the resources provided under Executive Board decision 95/23 for the period 1997-1998. It highlights the Unit's role in fostering South-South exchanges of expertise and practical experiences, policy dialogue and partnership-building, the broadening of South-South channels of communication, the sharing of best practices, as well as efforts to promote policy coherence and a coordinated approach to technical cooperation among developing countries in the United Nations system.

A recommendation for Executive Board action is contained in chapter VII.

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I. PURPOSE

1. The present report provides information on technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) during the biennium 1997-1998.

II. INTRODUCTION

2. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/96 of 19 December 1994, the Special Unit for TCDC (SU/TCDC) carried out wide-ranging consultations that led to the formulation of comprehensive proposals contained in the 1995 report entitled "New Directions for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries". This document, subsequently endorsed by the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries in its decision 9/2 of 6 June 1995, the Executive Board of UNDP and UNFPA, in its decision 95/19 of 14 June 1995, and the General Assembly in its decision 50/119, principally proposed that the TCDC process focus on strategic initiatives that were likely to have a major impact on a large number of developing countries in critical areas such as trade and investment, debt, the environment, poverty alleviation, production and employment, macroeconomic policy coordination, and aid management.[1] In its resolution 50/119, of December 1995, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations contained in the New Directions report and called upon all governments, relevant United Nations organizations and multilateral financial institutions to consider increasing allocations of resources for TCDC.

3. In recognition of the importance of TCDC, in its decision 95/23 of 16 June 1995 the Executive Board allocated 0.5 per cent of UNDP core resources for such activities. Subsequently, to ensure the effective use of the resources, the Special Unit developed the first cooperation framework for TCDC, 1997-1999 (DP/CF/TCDC/1), which was noted by the Executive Board at its second regular session 1997.

4. In implementing the cooperation framework for TCDC, the Special Unit has pursued a strategy of capacity- and partnership-building for the expansion of TCDC. Its programming has been rationalized to concentrate on initiatives that are both innovative and replicable and have the potential to attract financial backing by other partners to establish or consolidate long-term collaborative partnerships.

5. During the period under review, the TCDC programme has assisted in: (a) facilitating the exchange of expertise and the strengthening of operational networks among developing countries in the priority areas recommended by the New Directions report; (b) deepening South-South policy dialogue and intellectual exchanges on critical issues of development within the context of globalization; (c) enhancing South-South channels of communication and the sharing of best practices; and (d) mobilizing broad-based support for TCDC and economic cooperation among developing countries (ECDC) within the United Nations system and throughout the global community.

III. SOUTH-SOUTH EXCHANGES OF EXPERTISE AND SUPPORT FOR OPERATIONAL NETWORKS

6. The Special Unit worked with a broad array of networks in the South on issues ranging from environmental sustainability concerns, through macroeconomic policy issues, to human capacity problems. For example, the Unit has supported networks on biosystematics in Asia, the Pacific and East Africa, which are documenting and sharing expertise in the identification and classification of micro-organisms, insects and nematodes in the various regions. Similarly, it has responded to the renewable energy needs of many Asian countries through support to the Network on Small Hydropower Development, located in Hangzhou Province, China.

7. A significant intervention in the area of health care has involved support to the Regional Prevention of Maternal Mortality Network, headquartered in Ghana. The Network serves both as a repository and a provider of knowledge and experience of effective methodologies for measuring and reducing deaths caused by complications during pregnancy and childbirth. The Network has successfully helped reduce maternal mortality in 11 rural communities in Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Efforts are under way to replicate these experiences in Kenya, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and other sub-Saharan countries.

8. Support to the South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme has provided a forum for grass-roots community leaders to exchange experience and ideas on effective approaches in the mobilization of communities to fight poverty. The Programme has helped to disseminate information on poverty alleviation practices proved successful by organizations such as the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh; the National Rural Support Programme and the Orangi Pilot Project in Pakistan; the Hamanthota Women's Development Foundation in Sri Lanka; and the Working Women's Forum in India. Through training on a massive scale the programme has helped to create a cadre of social organizers and grass-roots activists who catalyse change agents in efforts to eradicate poverty.

9. In support of production and employment, the Special Unit has assisted a technology management centre of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, which aims to strengthen linkages among southern centres of excellence in enhancing the economic profile of the region. The network brings together a wide range of stakeholders, including universities, research and development institutions, government agencies, the business community, and non-governmental organizations, to develop innovative approaches to increase productivity, diversify employment opportunities and improve competitiveness in response to globalization. The Special Unit has also supported the launching of the Microfin Africa Network, headquartered in Senegal, which facilitates the sharing of experience in microfinancing and micro-enterprises and has helped to create financing opportunities for small business ventures run by women.

10. Given that external interventions can succeed only where they converge with national development policies and plans, the Special Unit has collaborated with various partners to facilitate South-South exchanges on macroeconomic policy formulation and management. For example, in conjunction with the UNDP Country Office in Cuba, the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Government of Norway, the Unit has supported macroeconomic policy initiatives

for the recovery of the Cuban economy. With the support of Brazil, Chile and Mexico, the capacities of key Cuban macroeconomic policy entities, including the Ministry of the Economy and Planning, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Labour and the Central Bank are being strengthened. The Unit also sponsored a project aimed at creating an Internet-based mechanism for technical cooperation among municipalities of Latin America and the Caribbean so that participating local authorities could enhance their capacities to design and implement policies, programmes and projects to mitigate poverty, manage environmental conditions, and increase production and employment, including the development of frameworks that involve urban women in investment ventures. Similar assistance has been given to countries of Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States in efforts to draw on the experience of developing countries in other regions - notably Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Malaysia, Peru, the Philippines, Uruguay and Singapore - in strengthening their management and organizational skills to consolidate the political, economic and social reforms they have launched.

11. Considerable progress has been made by the Unit in facilitating interregional exchanges through the framework of TCDC. In collaboration with the Government of Malaysia, the Development Bank of Malaysia and the Japan Development Bank, the Unit sponsored a 10-day training course on credit analysis and development finance for selected middle-level managers in the financial sector of 10 African countries. A similar programme supported by the Unit focused on policy-related training in East Asian economic development for mid-level Eastern and Southern African professionals drawn from the civil service, academia, the media and the private sector, along with young scholars and potential policy makers in these subregions. Further, the Special Unit supported the United Nations University in Tokyo and the African Economic Research Consortium in Nairobi in a collaborative policy research programme on various experiences in both Asia and Africa. The programme focused on the adaptation to Africa of successful Asian models of export-oriented industrialization, and the management of financial flows, aid, and external debt.

12. The Barbados Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS-POA) provides a framework through which the Special Unit has endeavoured to respond to the development challenges shared by a large number of small island developing States (SIDS). As the designated focal point responsible for coordinating the UNDP follow-up to the implementation of the SIDS-POA, the Special Unit has supported a number of initiatives in regard to SIDS, including the preparation of a Small Island Development States Technical Assistance Programme (SIDSTAP), the assessment of unmet technical cooperation needs and priorities in the various SIDS regions and the launching of a pilot SIDS Information Network (SIDSNET). A key objective is to make the information relevant to the development of SIDS more accessible via the Internet. The Unit's support has also helped to improve national and institutional capacities in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action through training at the International Labour Organization Turin Centre for SIDS regional training institutions, as well as through the compilation of a directory of SIDS experts and institutions. Moreover, the Unit, in collaboration with the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Organization of African Unity, supported the July 1998 Ministerial Meeting of the SIDS in the

Indian, Mediterranean and Atlantic Oceans, which generated the Mahe Declaration and Programme of Action. The Mahe Declaration outlines measures for closer cooperation among participating countries and for the effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

13. The Special Unit joined a consortium of development partners in supporting the work of the West African Rice Development Association (WARDA), in the crossbreeding of Asian and African rice. The project has developed high-yielding rice species having the capacity to suppress weeds and withstand drought, pests, diseases and other environmental stresses. Initial tests indicate 20 to 25 per cent increase in yield and a shorter growing cycle of 90 to 110 days compared to traditional species, which take 130 to 160 days to mature. With the planned distribution of some 120 tons of the hybrid seeds, the project promises to boost rice production and food security throughout Africa and other parts of the world.

IV. POLICY DIALOGUE, INTELLECTUAL EXCHANGES AND PARTNERSHIP-BUILDING

14. In an effort to foster South-South policy dialogue, the Unit in 1998 transformed the magazine, Cooperation South, into a development journal to provide a platform for development experts, academicians and activists to share, analyse and debate development practices and policy options of relevance to the South. The journal will continue to be published semi-annually in English, French and Spanish with a distribution of over 30,000 to organizations and individuals mainly in developing countries but also in industrialized countries.

15. To advance South-South dialogue on private-sector-led development the Special Unit supported the Group of 77 and China in organizing the South-South Conference on Trade, Finance and Investment, held in San Jose, Costa Rica, from 13-15 January 1997. The Conference identified possibilities and strategies for accelerating the pace of economic cooperation in these sectors. It brought together key leaders in the private sector and non-governmental organizations from the 132 member countries of the Group of 77, as well as relevant international organizations. Reaching out to non-traditional development partners, the Unit also sponsored the participation of a group of 140 young entrepreneurs from 65 member countries. Educating young entrepreneurs about their responsibilities, opportunities, and the technical tools available to them provided an opportunity to rejuvenate South-South cooperation by opening dialogue with the emerging generation of skilled managers and socially responsible leaders.

16. In collaboration with the South Centre and the Third World Network, the Unit was able to provide developing countries with analysis and policy options for their effective integration into the global economy. The activities supported included a number of orientation seminars on the World Trade Organization (WTO) process and related issues for the Geneva-based Southern negotiators, and the publication of a monograph entitled WTO Multilateral Trade Agenda and the South.

17. The Special Unit also provided support to the Group of 77 in their efforts to define what countries in the South can do collectively to improve their development opportunities in the twenty-first century. In this regard, the Unit supported a high-level expert meeting held on 10 and 11 August 1998 in Jakarta, Indonesia, to prepare for a South-South Summit as agreed by the Group of 77 at its Annual Ministerial Meeting earlier in the year. The South-South Summit, scheduled to take place in 2000, is expected to enable Southern countries to develop a broad strategic framework for development in the new millennium. The Unit also supported a high-level meeting held in Bali, Indonesia, to discuss measures for strengthening regional and subregional groups of developing countries. The meeting explored channels for direct cooperation among such groupings as the Association of South-East Asian Nations, the Caribbean Community, the Market of the Southern Cone, the Economic Cooperation Organization, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Southern African Development Community and the Economic Community of West African States. Further, the Unit worked closely with the Group of 77 in organizing a brainstorming session, in September 1998 in New York, in preparation for the Conference of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol that subsequently took place in Buenos Aires, in November 1998.

V. MEASURES TAKEN TO BROADEN SOUTH-SOUTH CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION AND THE SHARING OF BEST PRACTICES

18. The Unit has retooled the old Information Referral Services system, turning it into an Internet-based global information service on TCDC, accessible at http://www.undp.org/tcdc/tcdc.htm. The new system, now called Information Referral Services - Web of Information for Development (INRES-WIDE), provides a gateway through which interested parties can instantaneously tap into detailed information on 18,000 training programmes and 12,000 expert services offered by some 4,000 institutions in developing countries. The system also opens the way for Southern development stakeholders to exchange information about their respective programmes and capacities, using a powerful search engine and a common electronic platform. Transcending the old system, which was limited to diskettes, the new database can be accessed directly from computer terminals anywhere in the world.

19. The new system also provides a channel through which interested parties can learn about innovative development experiences that can be adapted for use in other developing countries. Users will be able to search through a large menu of best practices that are being compiled in collaboration with leading institutions in various sectors such as agriculture, food security, environment, health, housing, poverty alleviation, science, and technology. In addition, the Special Unit has provided computer training and connectivity to more than 10 National Focal Points for TCDC, assisting them to establish home pages on the Internet. The expanded system will enable these entities to share calendars of events, hold open discussion forums, and link up to other relevant Web sites.

20. In collaboration with the UNDP country office in Venezuela, the World Bank Economic Development Institute, and the Inter-American Development Bank, the Unit supported an initiative to identify, describe, and disseminate successful poverty reduction practices in 10 Latin American countries. The project has

published and disseminated 100 case studies of successful partnerships among Governments, civil society organizations and the private sector collaborating in such areas as the financing of low-cost housing, micro-enterprise development, and non-formal and informal education. To ensure widespread access to this information, a book entitled Working Together for a Change was published, and a Web page, http://www.alianzas.org, has been created on the Internet. The same project helped create a network of over 50 academic/research organizations and organized over 20 training courses and seminars for them on poverty reduction.

VI. MEASURES TAKEN TO STRENGTHEN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS, POLICY COHERENCE AND THE COORDINATION OF SUPPORT TO TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

21. In 1998, the revised version of the Guidelines for the Review of Policies and Procedures concerning Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, prepared by the Unit in accordance with decision 10/2 of the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, were endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1998/284 and noted by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/205. This provides a clearer baseline for a more coordinated approach to TCDC among the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system.

22. The report of the Secretary-General assessing TCDC over the past 20 years was also prepared by the Unit, in keeping with General Assembly resolution 52/205 of 18 December 1997. The report incorporates a number of recommendations endorsed by the General Assembly at its fifty-third session that can significantly foster socio-economic progress in the South through further integration of TCDC and ECDC into the operational activities of the entire United Nations system.

23. In further effort to facilitate the integration of South-South cooperation into programmes supported by UNDP, the Administrator requested resident representatives in November 1997 to "ensure that UNDP responds effectively to the various decisions of the UNDP Executive Board, the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations General Assembly, by adopting specific measures to intensify support for TCDC". The strategy outlined by the Administrator called for: (a) mainstreaming the TCDC modality in all programmes and projects of UNDP; (b) according high priority to the TCDC modality in programmes and projects supported by UNDP; and (c) maintaining the leading role of UNDP in the use of TCDC and South-South cooperation within the United Nations system.[2]

24. Following the New Directions Strategy, the Special Unit has carried out the initial identification of developing countries that are willing and able to serve as catalysts for TCDC. At a meeting hosted by the Government of Chile in November 1997, 23 developing countries agreed to take the pivotal role of spearheading the advancement of the TCDC process within their respective regions. This arrangement, welcomed by a number of Member States, promises to involve more partners in the catalytic process of fostering TCDC. It could also

facilitate increased flows of technical exchanges from more advanced to less developed countries of the South in a mutually beneficial manner.

25. In keeping with the decision of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, the Special Unit organized the celebrations to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries in September 1998. The Unit used the event as a unique opportunity to mobilize increased support for the TCDC process throughout the United Nations system. The Deputy Secretary-General and representatives of Member States who spoke at the Special Commemorative Meeting of the General Assembly stressed the renewed relevance of TCDC in the context of efforts needed to enable developing countries to participate gainfully in the emerging global economy. At a high-level panel convened the same day to discuss TCDC in the new millennium, the Administrator of UNDP stressed the importance of TCDC in the context of globalization. Similarly, there was extensive discussion on South-South cooperation during the triennial policy review of the operational activities, which led the General Assembly, in its resolution 53/192, to, inter alia, "request [ ] the executive boards of the funds and programmes to review, with a view to considering an increase, the allocation of resources for activities involving technical cooperation among developing countries" (part II, E, 1, para. 43).

VII. EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION

26. The Executive Board may wish to:

1. Take note of the utilization of the resource allocation for technical cooperation among developing countries as a means of expanding global partnership and the capacity of developing countries to participate effectively in the emerging global economy;

2. Welcome the efforts of the United Nations Development Programme and the Special Unit to promote policy dialogue, foster South-South exchanges, expand channels of communication and for designing and implementing a results-oriented programme of technical cooperation among developing countries;

3. Request UNDP, to take steps to implement the revised Guidelines for the Review of Policies and Procedures concerning Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries and the recommendations contained in the Report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the integration of economic and technical cooperation among developing countries in the operational activities of the United Nations system (A/53/226/Add.4);

4. Request UNDP to take measures to respond to paragraph 43 of General Assembly resolution 53/192 of 15 December 1998, in which the General Assembly "request[ed] the executive boards of the funds and programmes to review, with a view to considering an increase, the allocation of resources for activities involving technical cooperation among developing countries" (part II, E, 1).

Notes

[1] Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, "New Directions for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries", p. 1.

[2] Letter to resident representatives, 12 November 1997.